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Japan

Agricultural Situation

This Week in Japan

2001

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Report Highlights: A summary of events and developments in the United States' largest export market for agricultural, forestry, and fishery products. This week's highlights include: Japan May Have Mad Cow Disease, Fresh Produce Exports to Japan Resume Amid Food Security Concerns, Japan Agrees to Joint Project on Hybrid Houses, and Enthusiastic Reception for ATO/Osaka's First Nursery Seminar.

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This Week in Japan

An Update of Major News and Events from the Largest U.S. Agricultural Export Market

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Japan May Have Mad Cow Disease: On September 11, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) announced that a five-year-old dairy cow may have Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). MAFF is awaiting confirmatory tests from foreign reference laboratories and has launched a full-fledged investigation on the origins of the cow and its feed. According to media reports, use of contaminated meat and bone meal in feed is suspected. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) has temporarily banned sales of animal products from the same farm and from cattle raised on the same feed. The suspected BSE case will likely impact on Japan's beef consumption and encourage consumers to eat other types of meat, poultry and seafood--particularly if additional BSE cases are reported. Some food service companies have already announced they are moving entirely to imported beef. (AgAffairs Tokyo)

Fresh Produce Exports to Japan Resume Amid Food Security Concerns: Despite last week's back-up at ports and hundreds of agricultural shipments arriving to Japan without original phytosanitary certificates due to halted air traffic, APHIS/Tokyo negotiated an emergency resolution with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (MAFF). As a result, fresh produce delays have all but disappeared. Though air freight shipments were also interrupted due to closed U.S. airports, as of this week these shipments from the U.S., including strawberries, have also resumed. However, in response to the recent events, MAFF has established a working group to look into food security. (AgAffairs Tokyo)

Japan Agrees to Joint Project on Hybrid Houses: Last week the 12th annual Building Experts Committee and Japan Agricultural Standards Technical Committee met in Ottawa. At the trilateral meeting between Japan, Canada and the United States, Japan agreed to work together to test construction methods for hybrid houses (those combining technologies of wood with steel-concrete construction). The Government of Japan also agreed to address concerns regarding test methodologies for 2x4 construction. Information was exchanged on equivalency negotiations, indoor air quality, fire resistance characteristics, and government loan guarantees for housing purchases. (AgAffairs Tokyo)

Enthusiastic Reception for ATO/Osaka's First Nursery Seminar: A new building ordinance in Tokyo requiring more greenery in municipal areas was the catalyst for ATO/Osaka to organize the first-ever nursery seminar in Japan focusing on the use of U.S. ornamental grass - a new trend in the United States which is gaining popularity in Japan. A guest speaker from the U.S. industry, an expert in ornamental grass design and maintenance, held seminars for 20 Japanese landscape architects in Tokyo and over 70 nursery trade contacts in Fukuoka. Landscape architects learned about U.S. ornamental grass varieties, maintenance and care, while wholesalers, growers, and importers learned about product availability, care and methods of sourcing from various regions of the United States. Having these diverse groups together in the seminars not only promoted interest in U.S. nursery products, but also fostered collaborative business plans among the participants. (ATO/Osaka)

Upcoming Events: September 26-28, Health Ingredients Japan in Tokyo; October 3-4, Japan Foodservice Fair in Tokyo.